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TORONTO, U. C. 15th January, 1840.

My Rev. Brethren of the Clergy and Laity of the Bishopric and See of Toronto :

On the 27th of May last, I congratulated you on the passing of a Bill by the Provincial Legislature, which referred the disposition of the Clergy Reserves to the Imperial Government;—not that I approved of its details, for they went to alienate the whole of the Church property, and to deprive the State of the power of redeeming its sacred pledge to all her members in the Colony, by extending the ministrations of Religion as the settlements and population increased. The Bill was nevertheless valuable on two grounds :—

1. It removed a source of contention which was disturbing the Province, and testified that, after many repeated trials, the Colonial Legislature had become convinced that the only tribunal by which it could be satisfactorily adjusted was that of the supreme government.

2. It was an invitation to the Imperial Government finally to settle a question involving so many opposing interests as to render it impossible to be fairly considered by the local authorities. Viewing it in this light, I was induced to believe that the invitation would be gladly accepted; and therefore did I rejoice, that all religious contention would disappear, and that henceforth the only rivalry among the different bodies of Christians in the Province would be to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The distance of the supreme authority from the scene of conflict and hostile opinions, which irritate neighbourhoods and perplex the Province, renders it best qualified to explain its own act; and if it be necessary to modify the provisions of the 31st Geo. 3rd. chap. 31, for the maintenance of a Protestant Clergy, it is the only authority in whose decision the parties more immediately interested will be found willingly disposed to acquiesce.

Instead of this wise and conciliatory course, other counsels have unfortunately prevailed. The question of the Clergy Reserves has been again returned, and a Bill has been introduced into the House of Assembly, by authority, as injurious to the Established

Such are a few of the many evils which the measure is calculated to produce, but fortunately it is one of those which must be tested by much higher authority than any in the Colony. After passing our Legislature, it has to be submitted to the British Parliament, and we may rest assured that a measure so completely subversive of all that forms the glory of the British Constitution, will never be allowed by that august and enlightened body to become Law in any Colony of the Empire.

On the whole, we need be under no great apprehensions in regard to any measure likely to pass the Provincial Legislature on the subject of the Clergy Reserves :—reckless injustice in their disposition will not be permitted; and although the Church may appear friendless and in peril, from the defection and treachery of some professing members, she has many devoted sons in the Colony. But if any of her children incline to despondency, let them turn their eyes to England, where we have protectors both numerous and powerful, watching our struggles, and holding out the hand of fellowship and assistance.

In London, the venerable Societies for the propagation of the Gospel, and for promoting Christian Knowledge, with our reverend Primate and the Bishops and Clergy, and a large portion of the Laity, have manifested a lively interest in the welfare of the Colonial Church. They have entered into our present depressed condition with kind and affectionate feeling. They rejoiced in the testimony which I gladly bore to the exemplary piety and zealous labours of my Clergy, and the generous efforts of our people, which have been increased under the discouragement of many difficulties and trials, to which they have been exposed for several years.

These venerable bodies, and individuals, have made, and continue to make, exertions for the benefit of the distant members of the Church, much beyond all former efforts; and the result of these pious exertions, while it calls for our heartfelt gratitude to God,

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It is not my intention, on the present occasion, to enlarge on the numerous evils which this Bill, were it unhappily to become Law, must inevitably produce; but a brief notice of some of the more prominent is required, in order to convince you of the necessity of a prompt appeal to the supreme Legislature.

It begins with depriving the National Church of nearly three-fourths of her acknowledged property, and then, as it would seem in mockery and derision, offers her back a portion of her own so trifling as would be totally insufficient to maintain her present Establishment, which is chiefly supported by the offerings of the faithful in England; offerings which ought to be transferred to other destitute Colonies, so soon as the Clergy Reserves become productive. The Bill proceeds not only to compromise the principles and interests of the Church, but to endanger the cause of Protestantism, by fostering endless division and perpetuating Religious discord.

By the provisions of the Bill, the Clergy and Ministers of Religion are made stipendiaries and dependents on the Colonial Government, and to seal their degradation, it confers on the Governor-in-Council power to invest the funds arising from the sales of the Reserves in Provincial Debentures (at present unsaleable), which the first financial difficulty will sweep away:—it thus leaves (in such an event) the Clergy and their families in helpless and irremediable poverty.

The Bill next proceeds to trample on the faith of the British Government, by destroying the birth-right of all the members of the Established Church who are now in the Province, or who may hereafter come into it; to all of whom the ministrations of their Religion are secured by the most solemn pledges, and the Law of the land.

Moreover, the details of the Bill promote error, schism, and dissent, against which we are bound to pray; and while it seeks to degrade the Clergy of the Church of England to an equality with unauthorized Teachers, it sacrifices to expediency the highest and holiest principles.

Such are a few of the many evils which the measure is calculated to produce, but fortunately it is one of those which must be tested by much higher authority than any in the Colony. After passing our Legislature, it has to be submitted to the British Parliament, and we may rest assured that a measure so completely subversive of all that forms the glory of the British Constitution, will never be allowed by that august and enlightened body to become Law in any Colony of the Empire.

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These venerable bodies, and individuals, have made, and continue to make, exertions for the benefit of the distant members of the Church, much beyond all former efforts; and the result of these pious exertions, while it calls for our heartfelt gratitude to God, and affectionate thankfulness to our benevolent Fathers and Brethren, is full of encouragement both for them and for us.

Numerous meetings have been also held in the rural parts of England, to make known the present condition of the Colonial Church, and awaken the sympathy and call forth the assistance which that destitute condition requires. The most solemn appeals have been made from the pulpit for the same objects, and very numerous parochial associations have been formed under the immediate sanction of the Archbishop and Bishops, which aim at enrolling every member of the Church as a contributor to the good work, that the rich of their abundance may give plentifully, and the poor may do their diligence gladly to give of their little, and that the prayers of all, of every condition, may continually ascend for unceasing blessings upon this labour of love. The work is succeeding with increasing success; the amount of contributions and yearly subscriptions to the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel has been doubled within the last two years, and they are encouraged to hope that the present amount may be so augmented by continued and unwearied efforts among all the members of the Church, as to render the Society competent to the full discharge of their duty as agents of the Church, in the widely extended field of *HER* Missionary labours, which now happily embraces the four quarters of the world.

It can hardly be necessary to inform you that these pious exertions call for corresponding efforts among those whose spiritual welfare engages such affection in England, and prompts such beneficent assistance. Well may it be hoped that every member of the Church in this colony will now feel a double obligation laid upon him, to co-operate most cordially in the work which aims at the promotion of his own eternal welfare. Even the poorest settler will feel constrained to give, of his poverty, and offer up his fervent prayers for a blessing upon his gift, when he learns that the poorest members of the Church at home are called upon, and readily contribute their weekly pence, that they may have a part in sending forth the Gospel of the Son of God, and all the blessings of the Church as he founded it, to every portion of the British Empire.

Were each member of the Church in the Province, who has the

ability, to devote one hundred acres of Land towards its support, as an instrument in the hands of God for the spiritual instruction of the people, an endowment nearly equal to that set apart by the Constitution, might in time be accumulated, and the Church, freed from all anxiety, would flourish to the lasting benefit of the country. Were indeed each communicant to give a few acres of land, it would in time ensure the independence of the Church, nor would any such assistance be long wanting, were we all, both Clergy and Laity, animated wholly by the principles of the Gospel, for in that case the same liberal spirit and enlarged views which animated the first Christians in every land of their conversion, would produce the same fruits, and a portion for the Lord would be first set apart; it would also be permanent, and not allowed to fluctuate according to the varying tempers and dispositions of the people.

You are probably aware, that during the last session of Parliament petitions were presented from many Parishes in England on behalf of the Colonial Church. The feeling which prompted them will probably produce many more Petitions in the next session. Having had an opportunity of communicating with distinguished Members of both Houses of Parliament, Lay and Clerical, as well as with two of the Colonial Bishops, I am happy to inform you that all concurred in opinion, that it is the duty of every one of our congregations in every settlement, large or small, to forward similar petitions. They should be grounded upon a sincere concern for the spiritual destitution of the Colonies, and the terms in which they are expressed should be marked by that Christian moderation which will receive the respect which they ought to shew for the Imperial Parliament. They should be so perfectly free from every thing like party or political feeling, that they may be fit for presentation by men of all parties who can feel for the spiritual wants of their distant Brethren. Their prayer must be cautiously expressed, that it may not ask for more than it is in the power of the two Houses to grant. They must

be written, not printed, and forwarded to me, to save postage, by any friend who will take the trouble of handing them.

To assist you in preparing such Petitions, I annex a form similar to that which is now in course of signature in the Diocese of Nova Scotia, which may serve merely as a model. You will observe that the prayer is for all the Colonies, as it is the earnest desire of the friends of the Church to induce the British Government to adopt a general measure for the religious instruction, through her ministrations, of every foreign dependency belonging to the Crown.

I have thus been carried much further than my inclination would lead me into the secular concerns of the Diocese, by a persuasion that our attention to them has unfortunately been made necessary. But we must not allow them to occupy such undue portion of our regard as would interfere with our more solemn duties:—we have higher and holier objects than any which are limited to this world of change, to engage our attention and quicken our exertions.—Let these be ever in our thoughts to assuage all anxiety for less important things, and prompt the continued aspirations of our hearts for unceasing blessings from Him who can order all things for the benefit of His Church, and will supply protection and consolation under every trial and affliction which his unerring wisdom may permit to come upon his servants.

Let our faithful seeking be for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, with fullest faith in His divine assurance, that all things necessary for us will then be added from the exhaustless store-house of His mercy.

Fervently commending you to that unfailing mercy, and earnestly desiring that our hearts and prayers may be united, and continually ascend in devout supplication to the most Holy Trinity for the richest blessing upon all our labours in the Lord,

I am, my Brethren of the Clergy and Laity,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

JOHN TORONTO.

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